

September 23, 2005

The Honorable Rya W. Zobel
United States District Court
John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse
1 Courthouse Way
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Judge Zobel,

My name is Rosa Paiva Chasse and I am writing this letter in support of my sister, Carla Paiva. I am 37 years old and live in Fall River with my husband and five children.

Carla and I had an incredibly painful and sad childhood. Our father was a mean and violent alcoholic. My father beat my mom and me and my eight siblings regularly. We went to bed scared every night, never knowing when our father would come home, if he would be drunk, if he would beat us or if he would let us sleep. He often threw us out on the street in our pajamas. We frequently went to bed without food because our father would spend all of the household money on alcohol. We were evicted and homeless for periods of time. Possibly the most painful part of our childhood occurred after DSS got involved with our family. Our mom was given the choice of keeping her kids and putting our father in detox; she chose my dad over us. We were all placed in foster homes.

My foster family was in Swansea, Massachusetts. I was already 14 or 15 years old at that time and only stayed with my foster family until I was 16. Then I returned to Fall River to be with my family. After all of the hardship we endured as kids, all my siblings and I wanted was to be together. Being spread out in foster homes was incredibly difficult for us. Carla was lucky and placed with a wonderful foster family. Even so, Carla ran away from her foster home to be with us in Fall River. Carla went back to her foster home after she got pregnant. She had her son, Russell, in her foster home.

From the very beginning, Carla was a wonderful mother to Russell. Russell is Carla's whole world; she would do anything for him. Considering how young Carla was when she had Russell and given the horribly difficult childhood we had, Carla has done an amazing job at mothering Russell. It is very important to Carla that she give her son a childhood that is better than the one she had. This is exactly what she has done. Russell is Carla's first priority.

Carla and I take care of our parents together. My dad had a severe heart attack a year ago and suffered brain damage. He cannot do anything for himself. My mother, who suffers from diabetes and the early stages of Alzheimer's, is not as sick as my dad but is not well enough to take care of him. Carla and I split the housework, the laundry, cooking, and grocery shopping for our parents. However, Carla takes care of all my parents' medicine – she orders it, picks it up, and gives it to them. Carla has more experience with medicine and I don't know anything about it. If Carla is incarcerated, she will have to teach me about the medication so that I can take over these responsibilities too. It will be incredibly difficult for me to take on care of my parents all by myself. I already have my hands full with five kids at home to take care of.

Of course, if Carla is incarcerated, the person who will suffer the most is Russell. It is unthinkable to imagine Russell without his mom. I just don't know how he will cope with losing her.

Carla made a big mistake. Carla regrets this mistake every day and she will have to live with it for the rest of her life. I believe that Carla has learned her lesson. Carla has a good heart. She always does what she can to help those around her. I pray that you will give my sister Carla a second chance.

Thank you,

Rosa Paiva Chasse
216 Quequechan Street
Fall River, MA 02720

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rosa Chasse".